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TAGS: [ASEC](#) [PREL](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: PRT MAYSAN: GENERAL MEHDI ANGLES TO BE NEXT POLICE
CHIEF

Classified By: Deputy Political Counselor Greg D'Elia, Reasons 1.4(b,d)

¶1. (C) On 01 February 2008, the Maysan PRT met with Major General Mehdi al-Gharrawi at his Baghdad residence. Mehdi, a former commander of the Public Order Brigade in Fallujah, hails originally from Maysan province and also has a home in al-'Amara. Discussion focused on security in Maysan, notably the challenge of access to the province for the PRT and its US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) partners to monitor projects. Mehdi revealed that he was slated to become the new Chief of Police in Maysan. He relayed that he had been chosen by a Ministry of Interior nomination committee and approval by the Minister of the Interior and the Prime Minister was pending. Although the Minister of Interior was out of the country, Mehdi felt confident he would turn his attention to the matter upon his return. A decision to replace the current Chief of Police, General 'Ali Waham, could be made as soon as March 2008. Gen Mehdi requested USG support to influence the Minister of Interior and the Prime Minister in favor of his appointment.

¶2. (C) The PRT clarified that neither the PRT nor the Embassy would be able to influence such a decision. Nevertheless, if General Mehdi were Chief of Police in Maysan province, the PRT would have relationships with key officials in both the Iraqi Army and the Iraqi Police, thus significantly enhancing opportunities for access to the province. Although the PRT continues to engage with the Governor on security, much of any security plan developed by the PRT and Department of State security personnel will hinge on the use of the Iraqi Army and the police force in Maysan. Mehdi claimed that if he were Chief of Police he would "give the PRT the key to the province in order to do reconstruction projects."

¶3. (C) In related discussions, General Mehdi stated that the Maysan police force is circa 12,000 strong. Asked how many also adhered to Jaysh al-Mehdi, Mehdi replied there were approximately 1,000 members. Asked about the anticipated challenges of the post, Mehdi referred to his time as a commander in Fallujah, a difficult position where he had nonetheless proved successful. However, he did request assistance should he become the new Maysan Chief of Police. Mehdi emphasized the need for training and equipment, specifically vehicles, for Maysan police. With respect to training, he wants to approximately 400 police trained by CPAT or another agency in either al-Kut or an-Nassiriyah.

¶4. (C) Comment: In his encounters with the PRT, General Mehdi takes pains to demonstrate his influence and connections in Maysan. In the course of a February 1 meeting, Mehdi made a phone call to Maysan Governor Adhil Mhoder Radhi al-Maliki. After Mehdi left a message, the Governor promptly returned the phone call, at which point Mehdi made known to the Governor the presence of PRT members at his home, prompting the Governor to reiterate his outstanding invitation for the PRT to visit Maysan. The Governor did not make mention of a proposed visit to Tallil

AB to hammer out the details of the security plan for a PRT visit to Mayan.

15. (C) Comment Ct'd The PRT phone conversation with the Governor took place though the PRT's bilingual, bicultural advisor (BBA) who is also a Sayyid -- a descendant of the Prophet. When the PRT BBA first introduced himself to the Governor as a Sayyid, the Governor asked what a Sayyid was doing working for Americans. The PRT BBA then asked if the Governor had not heard about the fatwa of the marjia ('Ali al-Sistani) determining that it was permissible to work for American civilian organizations focused on reconstruction. The Governor laughed and said "Okay". End Comment.

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